



# Press Release

## District of Columbia National Guard



**Major General David F. Wherley, Jr.**  
**Commander**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**June 30, 2006**

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## Terrorism response team passes Army evaluation

Washington, D.C. — The D.C. National Guard's 33<sup>rd</sup> Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Civil Support Team (CST) passed the Army external evaluation with flying colors June 28. Passing the evaluation, known as an EXEVAL, is one of the first important milestones this specialized military unit must pass towards its ultimate certification by the Pentagon.

The 33<sup>rd</sup> is one of 55 CSTs nationwide that are manned, equipped and trained to respond to a terrorist attack involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high-yield explosives (CBRNE).

"We've been attacked twice here in the District," said Maj. Gen. David F. Wherley, commanding general of the D.C. National Guard, referring to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon and the subsequent anthrax letters sent to Congressmen on Capitol Hill. "Because of these attacks and the importance of our nation's capital, getting our CST certified is a top priority for the D.C. National Guard."

One more training requirement for an individual on the 33<sup>rd</sup> CST will need to be completed before General Wherley can recommend the team for certification. His recommendation is forwarded to the National Guard Bureau and then the Pentagon for final consideration.

The CST is manned with 22 full-time Guardsmen and women from both the Army and Air National Guard. The team consists of seven specific sections comprised of specialists in each of the primary functional areas: Command, Operations, Communications, Decontamination/Logistics, Medical, Science and Survey. Each CST is capable of rapid response capabilities to include detection, identification, analysis, communication support, expert medical advice and limited decontamination of personnel.

Wherley and his staff were given an out briefing on the results of the EXEVAL June 29 by the Army. The 33<sup>rd</sup> CST received a "T" for trained in all 15 of the categories evaluated by the Army. Evaluated tasks included the ability to enter a "target" where simulated CBRNE material had been planted. Survey teams entered a building at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington wearing Level A protection suits, the highest level of protection that can be worn when entering an environment with chemical or biological substances. Other tasks included setting up communications, decontamination, operations and medical monitoring of personnel sent into a suspected contaminated area.

Heat was the main factor for the CST which worked from 4 p.m. until well into the early morning hours June 29 to complete the EXEVAL, but the Army gave high praise to the unit for taking care of its soldiers under a stressful environment. The CST received a standing ovation

from the JFHQ staff when the results were revealed, and General Wherley gave each member of the CST his personal coin for a job well done.

“Because of the critical infrastructure located here in the nation’s capital,” Wherley said, “each of you has to be at the top of your game every day of the week.”

The National Guard began fielding CSTs nationwide in 1999 in response to an increased threat of terrorism in the U.S. Ten teams were fielded and certified in 2000, with Congress ultimately approving one CST per state, territory and the District of Columbia in subsequent years. California has two CSTs.

Because of the importance of Washington, Wherley said a part-time CST was pulled together prior to the standup of the 33<sup>rd</sup> CST. Under the leadership of Col. Greg Castello, the part-time CST provided a good base for the now existing full-time CST. Castello became the commander of the 33<sup>rd</sup> but has since been promoted as the D.C. National Guard’s military personnel officer. The CST is now commanded by Maj. Robert Weir “Seeing this team finish its EXEVAL is the finest moment for me during my command,” Wherley said.

The CST can provide expert advice to the on-scene commander via its electronic reachback capabilities through the Unified Command Suite. reachback allows the CST and the Incident Commander to consult with civilian experts in science and medicine. In addition, an Analytical Laboratory Suite provides trained science experts on the CST to determine whether samples collected by Level A survey teams have collected potentially hazardous or deadly chemicals while in the hotzone.

The CST deploys to incident locations by the most expeditious means possible. The team is equipped to transport its assets by ground, helicopter and fixed wing air platforms.